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GET READY

Yes, Great Lent will soon be here. We are being prepared by the start of the Triodin and the reading of the Gospel from Luke 18:10-14 on January 28 about the Publican and Pharisee.

This gospel tells us this story to show us how conceit and pride in one's virtues do not count in God's eyes. A sinner, if he is humble and owns up to his faults and repents, is nearer God's love than the person who prides himself on his outward good works and despises his fellowmen. The hymns and canon of the Week of the Publican and Pharisee speak to us of humility. To move our hearts to penitence, special penitent prayers to Jesus Christ and His Mother are sung: "Open Thou the gates of repentance to me, O Lifegiver, for my soul longs for Thy holy Temple, though its own bodily temple is wholly defiled. But Thou, in Thy bounty, cleanse it according to Thy loving-kindness." "O Mother of God, lead me into the path of salvation, for I have hardened my soul by shameful sins, and have spent all my life in indolence (laziness). Save me, then, by Thy prayers from all impurity."

This week is followed by that of the Prodigal Son, then by Meatfast and then Cheesefast and Great Lent on February 19.

* * * * * *

People are drawn to the Church by the testimony, courage and integrity of ordinary Orthodox who give an account of their faith. "It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos..." In prayers and hymns, the word <u>meet</u> is an adjective, not a verb. It means "proper or fitting."

Do a simple deed of kindness
Its effect you may never see –
Yet, it may flow like rippling water,
Down the long road to eternity.

STRENGTH IN UNITY

By its very significance, church prayer is incomparably higher than prayer said at home, for as St. John Chrysostom tells us, a single "Lord have mercy" uttered in church together with the congregation of believers, is worth a hundred prostrations during lonely home prayers. Why is this so? Because our Lord said: "For where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20).

Some say that it is not essential to go to church to pray, that one can pray just as well at home. "Beware, for you deceive only yourselves," warns St. John Chrysostom. "You can, of course, pray at home but you cannot there pray as you can in church, amidst so many people, speaking to God with one voice. When you pray to the Lord alone you will not be heard as soon as when you pray together with your brethren, for together with them your prayer is great: you pray in unanimity, concord, a union of love and of prayer with the officiating priests. That is why the priests stand before us, that the prayers of the people who are weak in spirit, may be united with their stronger prayers and thus be uplifted to Heaven. Such prayer has much greater power, is far more bold and effective than private prayer recited at home. During church prayer it is not only people who lift up their voices, but Angels, too, come to the Lord with prayer, and the Archangels also make their devotions to Him.

These Truths We Hold

THE SPECIAL DAY

We know from the gospel readings: Matt 3:15-17; Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21 how Christ Jesus came to St. John on the bank of the river Jordan and told him to baptize Him "to fulfill all righteousness." So St. John baptized Him. And as Jesus came out of the water, the voice of God the Father was heard from heaven calling Him His beloved Son." And the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove came down upon Him. This Holy Day is called several different names as discussed in an article elsewhere.

The services for this day are like those of Christmas. There is strict fasting on the eve. After vespers there is the "great blessing of the waters." A large vessel full of water stands in the middle of the church, with candles around it. In front of it the Cross and the Gospel are laid on a small table.

After the water is blessed, the people drink of it and are sprinkled with it as they kiss the Cross. They also take some home. This ceremony is in remembrance of Christ's baptism, and also because in the early Church many learners (cathechumens) were baptized on this day.

After the Liturgy, in the Orthodox countries, and in more and more towns in the USA, there are processions to the seashore, rivers, lakes or open wells and the waters are blessed by plunging the Cross into them. This is in memory of an ancient custom in Jerusalem when the Patriarch and people went to the river Jordan to hold this service. So now it is called "the procession to the Jordan."

The Eve is on January 5/19.

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The question is not where is God, but where isn't He?

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CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY 2007

DIED: FR. JOHN DOLHY, retired, in Scranton, PA

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S wife recently presented the first three volumes of the first full collection of his works to be published in Russia. Solzhenitsyn was not at the presentation in Moscow, saying he feels the "draining of the life force," as he is approaching his 88th birthday.

THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA will present concerts of the Russian Romantics during their Winter Festival - January 9-28. Among the presentations, which will be given throughout the state, are works by Rachmaninoff, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Cui and Balakirev. They will also include interactive discussions, receptions and champagne receptions. For info call 1/800/255-3476 or visit www.njsymphony.org/russia. Tickets start at $20.

FOR ANOTHER VIEW of the situation in Great Britain and Bishop Basil, see exarchate-uk.org. We had another site last month.

MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR: Pascha falls on April 8. The Western Church will observe Easter on the same day. Great Lent starts on February 19 with the Pre-Lent or Lenten Triodion on January 28. Ascension is on Thursday, May 17 and Pentecost Sunday is May 27.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF GREECE, Archbishop Christodoulos will make a historical fist when he meets with Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on December 14. It will be the first ever visit of an official Greek church leader to the Vatican.

SCOBA, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, met in Chicago recently for a special meeting similar to those of 1994 and 2001, to review the work of the various pan-Orthodox agencies and commissions. This meeting was in addition to the regular meetings which are held twice a year.

SEVERAL PEOPLE ARE COLLECTING parish anniversary books for research into the early history of Carpatho-Russian parishes founded by the immigrants to this country. Among them is John Schweich, 11900 Moss Point Lane, Reston, VA 20194. Don't throw away that anniversary book you may have when downsizing or cleaning out the attic. Contact Mr. Schweich first.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IS GROWING IN LATVIA. The largest concentration of Orthodox believers is in Riga and Daugavpils. A new vicar bishop was consecrated for the expanding church – Archmindrite Alexander (Matrenin).

WHERE ARE 2000 PRIESTS at the present time who preach at military units in Russia. In November, the Orthodox Church passed a resolution in support of a move to re-introduce chaplains into Russia's armed forces. The Baltic states and Armenia were the first among the post-Soviet states to bring chaplains back into their armies. Ukraine and Georgia plan to follow suit. Patriarch Alexy said that priests are to focus on spiritual matters rather than discipline and warned against expecting chaplains to do what in other armies is done by military police.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, The Gesture, The Mystery, The History by Andreas Andreopoulos is one of the most easily read books encountered in a long time. The author uses Scriptural references more than references from the Holy Fathers to make the book more palatable to non-Orthodox readers. Why do we make the sign of the Cross? How did this become customary? Why do the Orthodox and Catholics hold their hands differently while making the Sign? For info: Carol Showalter at 508/255-4685 or cshowalter@paracletepress.com. The book sells for $19.95.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES were built in many European cities as a part of an official church-building program. Things changed after 1917. Currently, there are organized parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in about 42 countries outside of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

A FALSE IMAGE of worshippers is portrayed by the Western Media who give the impression that just old women in babushkas attend church services in Russia. According to Metropolitan Kiril of Smolensk, the average age of worshippers is decreasing and attendance is increasing.

THE RAPTURE was never mentioned at any of the Seven Ecumenical Councils held in the early centuries of Christianity, which met to discuss such matters. According to the Apostolic Constitution, written in the Near East between the years 341 and 400, the "catching up" mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 takes place at the Second Coming. St. John Chrysostom, one of the most noted experts in interpreting Holy Scripture in the early Christian Church, never once suggested that this passage taught a pre-tribulation rapture.

ACCORDING TO THE Union of Orthodox Citizens (in Ukraine) "Kievan Rus is again at a crossroad. This great country, which received her name, language and statehood from the Orthodox Church, is sought to be deprived of her historical memory, faith and future" by trying to establish a local Church and tearing the Kiev Metropolitanate away from the Moscow Patriarchate.

HOUSE BLESSING

Yearly, the priest blesses our homes at this season in a short ceremony involving God's mercy and blessings on the living and departed family members and all who dwell in the house. He sprinkles the holy water throughout the house to reveal the dwelling as a temple of God's presence manifesting our home as an extension of God's kingdom. He blesses the family members to purify us, renew our baptism, and rededicate the family to be, as St.. John Chrysostom says, a "small church," a community fruitful in prayer and in the practice of love throughout the entire year. One of the prayers concludes:

> O Lord, be in our thoughts, in our words, in our deeds, in our tears, and in our laughter. O Lord, let Your presence be felt in this house, and in those who enter it, as it was felt by John when You were baptized in the Jordan River.

PREPARATION FOR A HOUSE BLESSING:

- In a main room or at the icon corner place a candle, cross and/or icon on a clean linen cloth.
- Have a small container of holy water that was blessed on the feast of Theophany.
- Have all radios, stereos, television, etc., turned off for the blessing.
- Please have all pets confined or restrained.
- If you have any religious articles you wish to be blessed, please place them on the table by the holy water.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone present assemble in the prepared place.
- Sing the festal troparion and as much of the ritual as possible. In some places the cantor accompanies the priest, in others the priest goes alone. Therefore, participation is important.
- By custom, in some places, the youngest member of the family, or a person bearing the name John , carrying a candle, leads the priest through the house for the blessing. The head of the family does this in different localities.

GOD'S VOICEMAIL

We have all learned to live with "voice mail" as a part of modern life. But, have you wondered what if God decided to install voice mail? Imagine praying and hearing this:

– Thank you for calling my Father's House. Please select one of the following options:

*Press 1 for Requests
*Press 2 for Thanksgiving
*Press 3 for Complaints
*Press 4 for ALL other Inquiries.

What if GOD used the familiar excuse … I'm sorry, all of our angels are busy helping other saints now. However, your prayer is important to us and will be answered in the order it was received, so please stay on the Line."

– If you would like to speak to:

*Gabriel, Press 1
*Michael, Press 2
*For a directory of other angels, Press 3
*If you would like to hear King David sing a psalm while you are holding, Press 4
*To find out if a loved one has been assigned to Heaven, Press 5, enter his or her social security number, then press the # key. (If you get a negative response, try area code 666).
*For reservations at "My Father's House," please enter J-o-h-n, followed by 3-1-6.
*For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, and where Noah's Ark is, please wait until you arrive here.

–Our computers show that you have already prayed once today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow so that others may have a chance to get through.

–This office is closed for the weekend to observe a religious holiday. Please pray again on Monday after 9:30 AM. If you need emergency assistance when this office is closed, contact your local pastor.

Thank God (today) that He doesn't have voice mail and He listens whenever we pray.

(Continued from page 71)

KITCHEN CORNER

2 cups flour
1/2 cup nuts or raisins, optional

Make a sponge by stirring the 1/2 cup flour into the warm milk. Add the yeast and the 1 teas. sugar to the 2 teas. warm water. When yeast is dissolved add to the cooled milk-flour mixture. Let rise until double. Add the 1/2 teas. salt to the egg yolks and beat until thick. Add to above mixture. Then add the butter, 1/3 cup of sugar, and lemon rind. Beat in. Slowly add flour and knead until mixture no longer sticks to your hand. Then add raisins or nuts, if desired. Let rise until double. Punch down and let rise again. Meanwhile, oil a loaf, tube or round pan and sprinkle generously with dry bread, cake or cookie crumbs. Add dough. Imbed scrolls. Let rise until double and bake until light, about 30 minutes in 350 oven. Frost if desired with vanilla glaze.

<u>VANILLA GLAZE</u>

Heat 1 1/2 tbls. milk and 1 Tbls. butter over very low heat until butter melts. Remove from heat, add 1/4 tsp. vanilla or lemon extract. Slowly blend in about 1 cup sifted confectionary sugar. Beat until smooth. Drizzle over babka.

NOTE: This would be interesting to try in bread machine. If you do, let me know your procedure.

LIGHTER MOMENT

A movie was just getting to the peak thriller moment when a woman began searching for something under her seat, disturbing the man in the seat next to her.

"What are you looking for?" the man asked, clearly annoyed.

"I dropped a caramel," the woman said, continuing to search. "I think it fell under my seat."

"You're going to all this trouble for a caramel that fell on the dirty floor?" the man asked in disbelief.

"I certainly am," the woman replied politely. "My teeth are in it."

Church Quiz

Circle the correct answer. (True / False)

1. Jesus was baptized on Epiphany. (True / False)
2. Water is blessed on New Year's. (True / False)
3. The Church Year begins on January 1/14. (True / False)
4. Ikons depicting SS. Stephen and Archangel Michael appear on the Royal Doors. (True / False)
5. We attend the Divine Liturgy to pray our private prayers. (True / False)
6. I can ask my best friend from college who is not Orthodox to be the godparents for my new baby. (True / False)
7. Orthodox believe in exorcism. (True / False)

ANSWERS:

1. True. He was baptized and God made clear that He was His Son. See Matthew 3:13-17 and listen to the Tropar.
2. False. It is blessed on Epiphany.
3. False. It begins on September 1/14.
4. False. The ikons of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and that of the Annunciation appear on the Royal Doors.
5. False. We can pray for private intentions but the main reason is together with others to worship God and pray for the world. Listen to the litanies.
6. False. Only practicing Orthodox can be godparents.
7. True. During baptism, the priest does an exorcism demanding the devil to depart from the person being baptized. In fact, the command is given to „breathe and spit upon him (the devil)."

SOBORNOST

"Russian" Councils

A number of local councils held by the Orthodox Church in Russia are other famous historical examples of the theology of *sobornost.* Converted from paganism in 988 by the see of Constantinople, the entire Russian Christian population existed as a "metropolitanate" under the Ecumenical Patriarchate until 1448. That year, because they felt that Constantinople had "apostasized" the true faith by agreeing to the Florentine Union, the Russian bishops held a local council without the guidance of the Byzantine Patriarchate and elected "on their own" a metropolitan to head their Church. (After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Russian Church became in fact "autocephalous," and the Ecumenical Patriarchate finally elevated it to the status of a Patriarchate in the year 1589).

In the 17th century, a local council was convened to resolve a serious problem in the Russian Church. Its Patriarch Nikon had come to terms with a number of practices among the Russian Orthodox that were at odds with the Greek customs of Constantinople. Nikon initiated a reform to get them in line with the Mother Church of the Russian people. So controversial were his reforms that a sizable sect, the "Old Believers," seceded from the Russian Church.

In 1666, a Council was convened in Moscow, presided over by the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. The council decided for the reforms of Nikon, but against the patriarch personally. Nikon's changes in the service books and his correction on how to make the Sign of the Cross (with three fingers, not two) were confirmed. Nikon himself, however, was deposed and exiled, with a new patriarch appointed to succeed him.

The Council asserted a Church-State relationship based on the Byzantine theory of a harmony of equal powers, but the decisions of the council did not remain in force long. The power that Nikon had amassed as patriarch were never forgotten. Czar Peter the Great was determined that there were to be no more Nikons. In 1700, when Patriarch Adam died, Peter took no steps towards the appointment of a successor. In 1721 he issued the famous **<u>Spiritual Regulations</u>** which declared the Patriarchate to be abolished, and set up in its place a commission, the "Spiritual College" or "Holy Synod." It was composed of 12 members, three of whom were bishops, and the rest drawn from the heads of monasteries or from the married clergy. This synod was not based on Orthodox canon law but copied from the Protestant ecclesiastical synods in Germany. Its members were not chosen by the Church, but nominated by the czar, who could (and often did) dismiss them at will. Overseeing this synod was a government official, the Chief Procurator. This system of Church government established by Peter the Great continued in force in Russia until 1917. This "Synodical period" was a time of decline for Russian Orthodoxy, with the Church completely subservient to the state.

Fr. Michael Dahulich, PhD
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WINTER'S GRACE

The Bible tells us to make our requests known to God. In Philippians 4:6 we are told: "Do not worry about anything; but under all circumstances, by prayer and supplication together with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God."

But prayer is much more than telling God what we want Him to do for us. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He began by reminding them: "Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." Matthew 6:8.

What we call "The Lord's Prayer" is more about living in a growing, trusting relationship with our heavenly Father than about what we want from Him. As we grow in faith, our prayers will become less of a wish list and more of an intimate conversation with the Lord.

Toward the end of his life C.S. Lewis, the English essayist, wrote: "If God had granted all the silly prayers I've made in my life, where should I be now?"

We might ask ourselves the same thing.

Prayer is placing ourselves in the presence of God to receive from Him what we really need. He already knows.

Memories

So Cold

I remember going to church on the Eve of Yordan. It was always so cold. We put on our heavy galoshes and fastened them with those special clips, but even then our feet froze as the old, coal furnace with its two openings in the church did not really heat the church. It was a treat to go in the evening after we had our special fasting meal for the second svayte vecer (second Holy Supper). We took cleaned whiskey or wine bottles in brown store bags to church for the holy water we planned to take home. I smile now when I read about winos hiding their bottles in brown bags. From the holy to the profane? The water was blessed in big galvanized tubs. I looked forward to sipping some water from the common cup that was passed around and filling our family bottle with the funnel and dipper provided. It made me feel so grown up. There was never a drop spilled on the church floor, as everyone was patient even after a hard day working at menial labor in a factory. When we took the water home, our mother took a sip, she didn't go to church because she stayed home with the younger children, and then she put it in the kufer (cupboard) where it would be safe until she needed it to give a sip to a sick or troubled child. The reverence is what I remember the most.

Susan Urban

Bad Combination

My dear mother, Nettie Sherby, leads us all each week at liturgy, with her "perfect pitch voice," in congregational singing at the Blessed Virgin Orthodox Church in South Plainfield, NJ. Do come and join us when you are in the New Jersey area and hear her beautiful voice that sounds "like a canary singing in the woods!" according to what one kind parishioner told me one day.

Mom and I love ice cream, and we feast on Klondike bars and cherry vanilla ice cream when we meet for lunch. However, not on Saturdays, because it "freezes the voice box up" and you can't sing your songs to our Lord very good on Sundays! The voice becomes really raspy! So, singers take note! Eat your ice cream after your dinner but not on the night before you will sing loudly your songs to Our Lord!

Anita Sherby Anderson

Noodles - Um Good

One never bought noodles in the store, they were always homemade. I remember my Mom and my Baba working up a tremendous large piece of dough, rolling it out with a wooden rolling pin, occasionally throwing some flour over it and when it was all stretched out like a large map of the world, would slice it across in about 3 to 4 sections. Then these sections were layered on top of each other and as an artist could paint a picture, Mom and Baba would use their four fingers as an edge and so carefully, yet swiftly, from so much experience, slice, chop-chop the dough to make the noodles. I can almost hear the rhythmic sound it made as the knife went through the dough and hit the wooden bread board.

Oh, yes, there was a large wooden bread board for all the baking of pies, breads, giving a place for the dough to rise. Getting back to the noodles, they were separated and allowed to dry for a period of time while the delicious soup was cooking, the aroma of which I can almost smell now. Dill and parsley from the garden, fresh carrots, potatoes simmering away, some cabbage leaves for flavor, a quart of home canned tomatoes for color, an onion and, of course, a clove of garlic.

My grandfather would always put a teaspoon of prepared mustard in his soup, and the chicken or rooster feet which he always added spread across the large bowl. Well, you haven't tasted a good bowl of chicken soup until you have had those homemade noodles.

Barbara Powell

Please send your Memories to Margaret Pysarchyk, 2125 Garfield St., Lorain, OH 44055 or at mpysarchyk@hotmail.com

WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?

This Holy Day is one of the oldest on the Church Calendar. It was celebrated as early as the 2nd century. In fact in the early Church, this Holy Day and not the Nativity or Christmas was the more important day.

So why does it have so many different days? And what are they?

EPIPHANY is taken from the Greek word "Epiphania" and simply means revealing or manifesting.

THEOPHANY adds to the meaning It means the revealing or manifestation of God. Our people called it BOHOYAVLENIYA, which means the revealing of God. Prior to His baptism, Jesus was simply known as Mary's son from Nazareth. But as we know from the reading of Matthew 3:13-17, the true identity of Jesus was made clear when the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a Dove and the voice of the Father was heard from the heavens, saying: "This is My beloved Son." Here God was revealed as Trinity.

ILLUMINATION or Feast of Light. Christ has come to enlighten us and to remove the darkness and fear from life. "Glory to Thee, Who has shown us the light!"

YORDAN or Jordan from the place where the Baptism took place.

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* * * * * *

In Protestant churches they sing: "Stand up, stand up for Jesus." They sit in church while the Orthodox stand up in worship.



Wide-Awakening... A man pulling a child from the ice-cold waters of a small river outside St. Petersburg, Russia, in a traditional Epiphany bathing ceremony. Thousands of Russian Orthodox Church followers plunge into icy waters, cleansing themselves with water blessed on Epiphany. It is considered holy and pure and is believed to have special powers of protection and healing.

WHY BLESS WATER

What is the reason for the blessing of water in the church on Epiphany? The Lord sanctified the waters by His Baptism in the River Jordan. But we pollute it again by our sinful impurity. And where sin is, the evil power invoked by it inevitably sets in.

The Holy Church, our solicitous and loving mother, comes to the aid of her faithful. Using her God-given right, she blesses the element of water on this day every year. Through the power of her conciliar prayers she expels from it the evil spirits and again calls down upon the waters the purifying grace of the Holy Spirit. In this way, on the day of the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, the fundamental purity and sanctity, restored once by the Lord in the Jordan, are returned to the waters.

The Life-giving Cross, immersed three times in the water, during the blessing service, accompanied by the prayers of the whole church symbolizes the Saviour Himself, the Son of God immersing in the streams of the Jordan. By being present in the church during the blessing of water, we are, as it were, standing on the bank of the Jordan at the sacred moment of the Baptism of the Lord. The Epiphany, which John the Baptist contemplated in reverential awe, is repeated in a mystical way before our eyes.

The Epiphany water, which is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, is just as pure and holy as the first water created upon the face of which the Spirit of God had moved, and as the waters of the Jordan whose waves had touched the Most Pure Body of Christ.

This is why we honor it worthily as a great holy thing, and reverently drink it ourselves and sprinkle our homes with it. The time will come when our last resting places will be made ready for us and this same holy water will accompany our mortal remains into eternity.

As we stand in the church at the service we shall together offer the prayers for the descent of the Spirit of God upon the waters. Let's gather in our hearts all our strength of faith and reverential feelings, so that the sacred moment might not find us unworthy and the grace of God might not serve to censure us. Let us all join together in one common and fervent prayer, and do not let one sinful, or even ordinary thought, disturb the reverential mood of the heart which the great mystery demands. (IN OTHER WORDS, LET US PARTICIPATE.) We shall stand here as though on the bank of the Jordan and the grace of God will bless us too with its all purifying power.

Adapted from
Fr. M. Smirnov's homily

Undique (from everywhere)

When there can be no Orthodox priest present to bury a person, mourners sing "Holy God, Holy Mighty, etc." as the coffin is being lowered. The same is done when an Orthodox priest is present at a non-Orthodox burial.

John Betjeman said: "Orthodoxy in the modern world is indeed an "old tree," but besides age there is also vitality, a "perpetual resurrection"; and that is this that matters.

What the gospel is to the ear, the icon is to the eye.

The pieces of prosphora received at the end of the Divine Liturgy may not be consecrated but they have been blessed. For this reason, they are not to be dropped on the floor or treated as a leftover hamburger piece from McDonald's.

We do not shake a bishop's hand. When we approach him, we cup our right hand in our left and ask for his blessing. He will put his right hand on our cupped right hand. We kiss it and he gives us a blessing.

The daily readings from the Bible are not in order – verse after verse. We inherited this from Judaism and this has been in use since the beginning of Christianity. The readings are appropriate to special days or liturgical seasons or bear on the theme of some aspect of the life of Christ.

It is uncertain what "hyssop" was in the Bible. It is mentioned many times in the Bible. We hear in Psalm 51: "He shall clean me with hyssop and I shall be whiter than snow." It must have had a long stem for it was also used to raise the sponge to Jesus' lips when he hung on the cross.

Did you know that in the Orthodox worship, praise and teaching are closely interwoven? If you follow the prayers and services of the Church, you will learn from them all her teachings and have a rich spiritual experience.

Pews are not traditional in Orthodox churches. We stand during worship services out of reverence and humility before God.

Editor's Notes

For the past several months, we have been featuring both a Bible and Church Quiz. This month, these have been combined into one. Which do you prefer?

I wish to thank you for your Christmas and New Year's greeting cards. It is so heartwarming to be remembered.

I also want to thank my "researchers." These kind people cut articles from their newspapers concerning religion. They help to make the Chronology interesting.

Yearly statements have been sent out for the packets. While making out the statements, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of individuals who have taken the ministry of furnishing information about the church to their fellow parish members. They distribute the copies and take care of adjusting the number needed and see that the bill is paid. Many of them sponsor the copies themselves.

As I write this, many are waiting to hear the outcome of the scrutiny of the materials dealing with the problems in the church. Some are patient, praying that the problem will be revealed and be resolved; while others are incensed at the events as they have unraveled and are taking it out on their parish. I advise those who discuss this with me to dichotomize – separate the faith of the Church from the politics of the church. Perhaps St. Clement in the year 96 said it best: "Why is there strife, anger, dissension, schism, and war among you? Is not then the God we have one God, and is not Christ one, and is not the Spirit of Grace infused in us one, and is not our vocation in Christ one? Why then do we tear and rend the members of Christ and rise against our own body and rush into such madness that we forget we are members of one another?"

God Be With You,

Matushka Nina

PRESS FUNDS

Thank you all for helping us to keep publishing. Ethel Watlock, Catherine Shaffchick, Margaret Rusynyk, Anonymous, Anne Dorozynski, Constantina Morgan, Irene Allen, Gloria Bench, Linda Smith, Helen Doelar, Raymond Rusnak, Thomas Shakun, Fr. Sergei Glagolev, Patricia Ann Celoric, Rev. Wolodymyr Wronski, Mary Vosburgh, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kulick, Prdc Alexis Bona, Michael Katchur, Dee Baumgarten, Barbara Andrews, Ann O'Brien, Ernest Schmidt, Pauline Demas, National Slovak Society of the USA

*Cecelia Davis for health of her twin sons Bryon and Myron and Matushka Nina

*William Holak for health of Fr. John and Pani Marge Fedornock, Fr. Michael Dahulich, PhD, and Marie Sowchick

May Almighty God rest the souls of His Servants in the Abode of the saints and may their memories be eternal.

*Fr. Averky and Matushka Dran Bondarchuk offered by Edith and Mike Bondarchuk

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BLESSED NEW YEAR

Many of us will ring in the new year on January 1. We will sing, toot horns and embrace one another to express our delight at the arrival of another year. As the psalmist says in 67:4 "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!"

This is the beginning of another year of God's blessings and grace in our lives. It's a time to rejoice and be glad!

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A kermes is a feast held on the patronal day of the church (the saint or event to which the church is dedicated). A fasengy or puscanja is a type of Mardi Gras feast held prior to Great Lent. Maslenitsa is another name.



Many cultures have a special bread which they bake for New Year's. Usually a coin is inserted in it and whoever finds the coin is believed to have good luck in the New Year. In Greece, they have the Vasilopeta, which means Basil's Bread. St. Basil is commemorated on January 1 - New Year's.

In some parts of Russia a special babka is made which is known as a Virtue Cake because little scrolls of paper on which the different virtues are written is baked in the cake. One was to concentrate on developing that virtue all through the coming year.

You can use any cake or bread recipe. To make the virtues, take a piece of paper and cut it into one inch squares. Write a separate virtue on each one – humility, charity, benevolence, temperance, patience, fortitude, faith, love, charity, hope, etc. Then roll each piece in a scroll, wrap it in aluminum foil and imbed each one in the dough before baking. Try to space them so that when the cake is cut, everyone will get a virtue.

The cutting of this cake is fun in either a family coffee time, a tea with friends or with a religious education class. In one parish, they had this at perohi making time. The hostess had added a scroll with hospitality on it. How clever!

Here is my recipe for the traditional small babka.

SMALL VIRTUE BABKA

3/4 cup scalded milk
1/2 cup flour
1 pkg. yeast
1 teas. sugar
2 teas. warm water
2 egg yolks
2 Tbls. soft butter
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 lemon rind, grated

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ALLELUIAS

We read in the Apocalypse or Revelation that a huge crowd sings Alleluia in heaven, and also that the four beasts and 24 elders speak in adoration of the Lord; that the whole army of heaven celebrates together to the sound of the braying trumpet with exultant singing of hymns (Rev 19:1). We must also eagerly join in this duty of praise. If we sing with pure hearts, we mingle in devoted adoration with the holy virtues (angels of the fifth highest rank whose duty is to restrain evil spirits); what we know to be the blessedness of heavenly creatures becomes the glory and favor accorded to us on earth.

Allelulia is clearly a new address noted for its brevity. It means "Praise the Lord." The churches use it as a votive prayer, and it is fittingly suited to sacred festivities. The tongues of cantors are adorned with it, and the Lord's basilica joyfully responds with it. (Cassiodorius)

LIGHTER MOMENT

I pulled into a crowded parking lot and rolled down the car window to make sure my golden retriever had plenty of fresh air. The dog was stretched out on the back seat and couldn't be seen. I wanted to impress upon her that she must remain there so I walked to the curb backward, pointing my finger at the car and saying louder and louder: "Now you stay. Stay you hear?"

The driver of a nearby parked car watched me with a perplexed look and then putting his head out of his car's window asked: "Lady, why don't you just put the car in park?"

Home Bible Reading Schedule

JANUARY 2007

1. Mark 5:24-34
2. Mark 6:1-7
3. Mark 6:7-13
4. Mark 6:30-45
5. Mark 6:45-53
6. Matt 24:1-13
7. **Matt 22:35-45**
8. Mark 6:54-7:8
9. Mark 7:5-16
10. Mark 7:14-24
11. Mark 7:24-30
12. Mark 8:1-10
13. Mark 24:34-44
14. **Luke 18:18-27**
15. Mark 9:42-10:1
16. Mark 10:2-12
17. Mark 10:11-16
18. Mark 10:17-27
19. Mark 10:23-32
20. Luke 6:17-23
21. **Luke 19:1-10**
22. Mark 12:13-17
23. Mark 12:18-27
24. Mark 12:28-37
25. Mark 12:38-44
26. Mark 13:1-8
27. Luke 18:2-8
28. **Luke 18:10-14**
29. Mark 13:9-13
30. Mark 13:14-23
31. Mark 13:24-31

BIBLE STUDY

On the Sunday following Theophany, we read from Matthew 4:12-17. Out of these five verses Jesus quoted two from Isaiah 9:1-2, these correspond to verses 15 and 16 in Matthew. Seven hundred years before Jesus quoted these words, Isaiah had spoken them to the Assyrians who had just conquered part of Israel. Many of them had been slain and those that remained were in a state of depression and without hope of ever seeing better times.

Although we may pass over this reading because of the many unfamiliar names, it is pivotal. It tells of the fulfillment of scripture for Isaiah was a prophet, it tells us that salvation is not only for the Jews but is also open to the Gentiles, that the kingdom of heaven is here and in verse 17 that Jesus is starting His public ministry.

We note here the use of repetition. John the Baptist had just said in verse 3:2 that there is a need to repent. Here Jesus repeats: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Orthodox Church makes much use of repetition. For example, "Again and again let us pray to the Lord." The use of so many Lord, have mercies and the repetition of whole prayers in the same service, was a teaching method in early times. Repetition. It is still used as anyone who has taken music or instrument lessons well knows.

Another point in this reading is the difference in Matthew and the verses in Mark and Luke. Matthew calls it the Kingdom of Heaven while the other two call it the Kingdom of God. One explanation is that the Jews considered God's name so holy as to teach that it should not be pronounced by man. As Matthew was writing his gospel for the Jews, he naturally took this into consideration.

Here we note another point followed by the Orthodox Church. The use of indefinite time. For example we say: "Christ is Risen" not did or was but is. This can be seen in verse 17: "...the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Here we see the use of the aorist tense – meaning it is and will be forever.

This certainly is an appropriate reading for the Sunday following Jesus' Baptism, for it tells of the beginning of His ministry to all peoples of the world.